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ITR FILING DEADLINE ENDS

Rejecting demands for extension of the deadline to file income tax returns (ITR) due to alleged glitches in the e-portal, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said December 31, 2021 would be the last date to file them

NO GLITCHES ON E-FILING PORTAL, SAYS GOVT

Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj said ITR filing seems to be smooth since as many as **5.62 crore** returns were filed as of Friday 3 pm compared with **5.43 crore filed last year**

He also played down complaints of glitches on the e-filing portal, saying **15% more ITRs** were filed this year

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

CORE SECTOR OUTPUT SLIPS

Growth in core sector output slipped to 3.1% in November from 8.4% in October. In November 2020, the output of eight core sectors had contracted by 1.1%

In November, crude oil and cement contracted while coal, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel and electricity recorded growth

Coal production up 8.2%, natural gas 23.7%, refinery products 4.3%, fertilisers 2.5%, steel 0.8%, and electricity 1.5% in November

The growth rate of the eight infra sectors stood at 13.7% during April-Nov against contraction of 11.1% in the year-ago period

CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT

India's current account slipped into a deficit of **$9.6 billion** (1.3% of GDP) in the September quarter

FISCAL DEFICIT

The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of November worked out to be 46.2% of the annual budget target for 2021-22 thanks to improvement in revenue collection

SMALL SAVINGS SCHEMES

The finance ministry has kept interest rates on small savings schemes unchanged for the fourth quarter of 2021-22

The New Indian Express wishes its readers a

Feb 28, 2022

LAST DATE TO COMPLETE E-VERIFICATION OF ITRs FOR FY20

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K'taka sees biggest Omicron surge

Reports 23 new cases of the Covid variant, tally stands at 66

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA witnessed a spike in Omicron cases on the last day of 2021, with 23 fresh cases being reported. With this, the tally of the new variant has gone up to 66. Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar tweeted, "23 new cases of Omicron confirmed today, of which 19 are international travellers from the USA, Europe, Middle East and Africa."

Of these, four were children have not received Covid vaccines, one person had received one dose, 12 had both doses, another person had received two doses along with a booster, two people were vaccinated but data on how many doses was not available and vaccination status of two other persons was not available.

The biggest single-day surge in Omicron cases in Karnataka came on a day when the state reported 832 Covid cases, which is the highest in three months after reporting 933 cases on September 30.

Bengaluru led the surge with the threat of a third wave looming. The state capital's active cases had fallen to 4,833 on November 30, but rose to 7,286 on Friday. The city had also witnessed its highest recovery rate of 98.31 per cent on November 30, but dropped to 98.12 per cent on Friday. The state is testing international arrivals for Omicron in Covid-positive cases. Department officials said the variant's spread could be much higher as genome sequencing is not being done on all those testing positive if they have had no travel history.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai instructed deputy commissioners of districts bordering the neighbouring states, including Kodagu, Chamarajanagar, Belagavi, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, to conduct more tests. P3

Health workers in PPE suit usher in the New Year with a message to people to stay safe amid the Covid-19 third wave scare, at a hospital in Bengaluru on Friday | VINOD KUMAR T

Big push to rapid antigen test booth

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH India on the cusp of a third Covid wave, top health administrators on Friday wrote to state chief secretaries asking them to open as many rapid antigen testing (RAT) booths as possible at government and private hospitals, doing away with the accreditation criteria.

As of now, India has a network of 3,117 molecular testing laboratories, which includes 2,014 RT-PCR, 941 TruNat, 132 CBNAAT and 30 other testing platforms, said the letter jointly written by Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan and ICMR director general Balram Bhargava.

Their estimated national molecular testing capacity is more than 20 lakh per day.

CONTINUED ON: P6

GST Council defers textiles rate hike, refers it to GoM

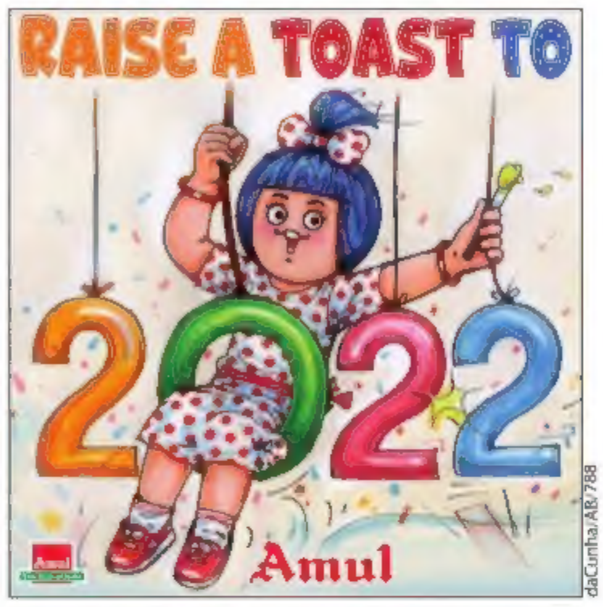
ANURADHA SHUKLA @ New Delhi

FOLLOWING opposition from traders and several states, the GST Council on Friday decided not to effect the tax rate hike on textiles from 5% to 12% for now. The ministers' panel looking into rate rationalisation will now take the call.

"We will retain the status quo and not go to 12% from 5%, in the case of textile," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters after the meeting. Sitharaman added that the Council was of the opinion that this is not the right time to do it as the textile sector is struggling to recover from the pandemic shock.

However, the Council did not give similar concession to footwear. At its meeting in September, the Council had decided to rectify the inverted duty structure for footwear and textiles. Subsequently, the rate for the two items for any value was raised to 12%, effective January 1, 2022. Earlier the GST rate was 5% for sale value up to ₹1,000 per piece in the case of apparels and per pair in the case of footwear.

At a pre-Budget meeting on Thursday, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister P Thiagarajan had asked if the rate hike can be delayed. Delhi, Rajasthan, Telangana and Bengal, too, opposed the move.



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IMD let Chennai drown without timely warning

S V KRISHNA CHAITANYA @ Chennai

Twice in two consecutive months, Chennai has received over 200 mm of rainfall and on both the occasions, the IMD failed to pick up the extreme weather event. While the city received 215 mm rainfall on November 7, it recorded 201 mm on December 31.

Officials TNIE spoke to cited the lack of adequate upper air data as the reason for this failure. Every two days, an instrument called radiosonde is flown on a weather balloon from Chennai as well as Karaikal to generate upper air observations. For several months, it was not carried out for lack of instruments. A senior official at the Regional Meteorological Centre here said they received the instruments only a few days back, and started generating data from Thursday. PIC: P7

BJP, Cong fight it out over temple law proposal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE state government's plan to free temples from government control has triggered a political slugfest between the opposition Congress and ruling BJP. While Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Friday clarified that they will not hand over temples to any group in particular and only free them from government control, Congress termed it a ploy to pass on temple management to BJP workers.

Bommai recently announced that the government will stop managing temples to ensure that the funds allocated are utilised for temple works alone. Since then, Congress has been attacking the state government.

State Congress president DK Shivakumar on Friday said the move is a big blunder and his party will not allow it to happen. The party will hold a meeting of senior leaders on January 4 to discuss further course of action, he added. "The ruling party is keen to introduce laws against cow slaughter, religious conversions and now freeing temples as it is losing polls," he said. CONTINUED ON: P4

KL RAHUL
TO LEAD INDIA

Captain Rohit Sharma was on Friday ruled out of India's upcoming ODI series in South Africa due to an injury, forcing the selectors to appoint KL Rahul as skipper for the white-ball leg of the tour | P19

EXPRESS READ

Conversion bid? Officials shut school

Belagavi: Even as the government is firm on anti-conversion law, a private school named after a particular community at Ilkal in Bagalkot has been closed by officials, who have charged it with trying to convert students. P7

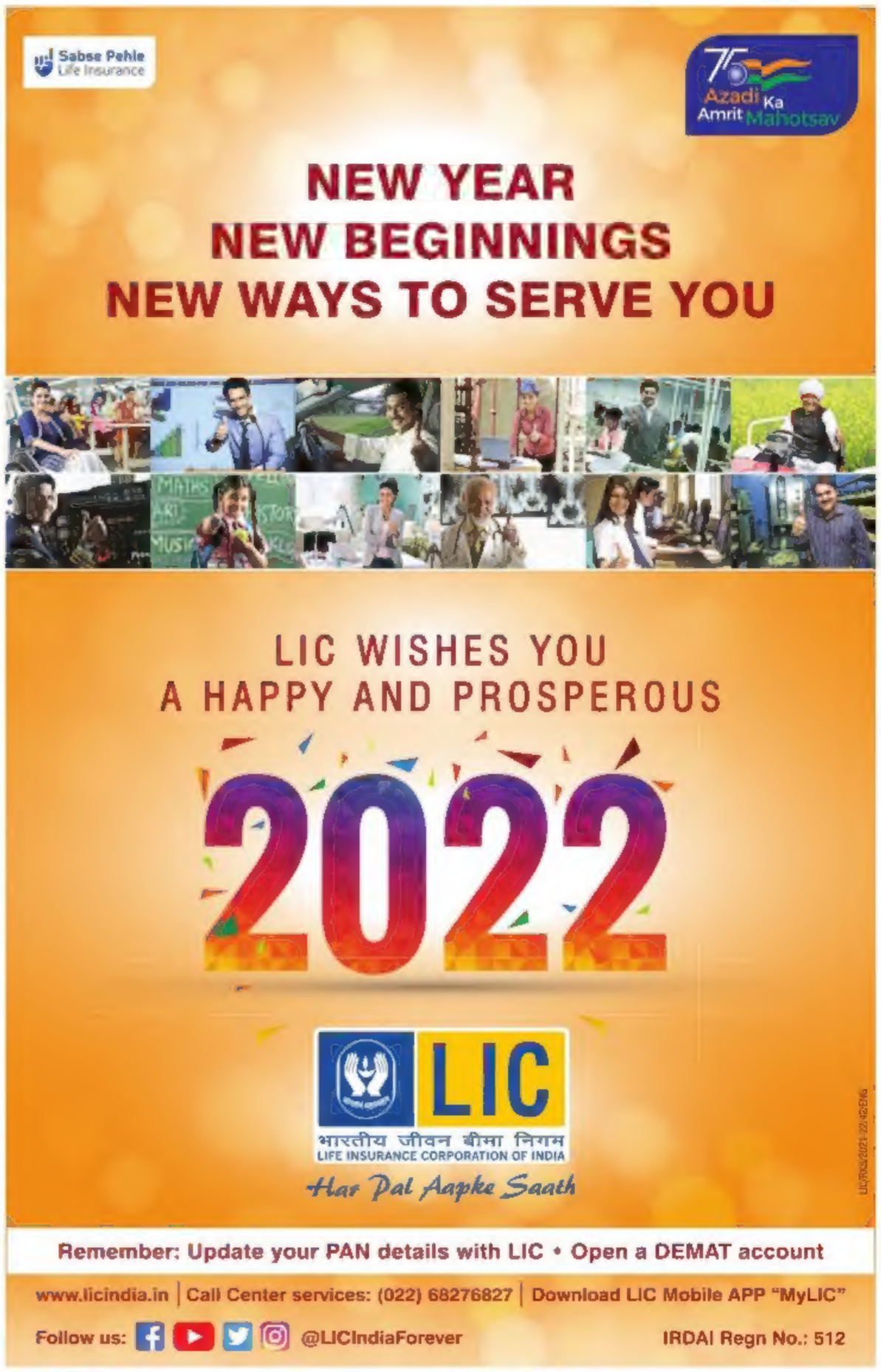
NHAI official held on graft charges

Bengaluru: The CBI arrested the Regional Officer, National Highways Authority of India, Bengaluru, Akil Ahmad and four others, including a general manager and executive director of a private firm, in an alleged Rs 20 lakh bribery case. P7

Congress, LDF in row over Prez honour

T'puram: The Kerala government through the vice-chancellor of Kerala University vetoed the proposal of governor Arif Mohammed Khan to confer honorary DLitt on President Ram Nath Kovind, Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala said. P7

LOOKING AHEAD 2022 EXPECT MORE ACTION IN POLITICAL THEATRE P4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